

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24

The contextualization of Chinese athletes' careers in the Chinese Whole Nation
System

Yufeng Li¹, Robert J. Schinke¹, Thierry R. F. Middleton², Pu Li¹, Gangyan Si³, & Liwei
Zhang⁴

Author Note

- ¹ School of Kinesiology and Health Sciences, Laurentian University, Canada
- ² School of Sport, Health, and Exercise Science, University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom
- ³ Sport Psychology Center, Hong Kong Sports Institute, China
- ⁴ Department of Sport Psychology, Beijing Sport University, China

Corresponding Author: Yufeng Li
School of Kinesiology and Health Sciences
Laurentian University
935 Ramsey Lake Rd.
Sudbury, Ontario
P3E-2C6
E-mail: yli9@laurentian.ca

25 **Abstract**

26 The current manuscript contributes to the development of culturally situated athletic career
27 transition literature through an examination of how improved support may be developed for
28 Chinese athletes within their training environment and the Chinese Whole Nation System
29 (CWNS). An overview of the CWNS three-level training network is contextualized through a
30 storied account written by two of the authors who are former Chinese elite athletes. The
31 contextual insights of the CWNS conveyed through the blending of their shared reflective
32 account, brings meaning to their journeys through the CWNS, whilst evoking consideration
33 of the potential challenges and pathways embedded within Chinese athletes' careers. The
34 impact of the CWNS on athletes' career development is then considered more broadly in
35 relation to the athletic career scholarship. Highlighted is the importance of supporting
36 aspiring athletes' holistic development and accounting for transitions in athletes' sport and
37 non-sport lives as they transition through the CWNS.

38 *Keywords:* Chinese Whole Nation System; Chinese athletes; athletic
39 career; self-reflective tale

40 Chinese athletes have broken 1341 world records, won 3586 world championships,
41 and 240 Olympic gold medals spanning four decades, from 1980 to the end of 2019 (GAS,
42 2020a). Owing to the international success achieved by Chinese athletes, some sport
43 scientists have declared the Chinese Whole Nation System (CWNS) to among the most
44 effective athletic career systems for selecting and developing elite athletes from a young age
45 (Ge et al., 2019; Hong et al., 2005; Si et al., 2016; Zhang, Xiong et al., 2019; Zhao et al.,
46 2019). The success of Chinese athletes in international competitions is a result of the Chinese
47 Government's aim, through the CWNS, to improve its international stature through world-
48 class sport endeavours (Hong et al., 2005; Ma, 2018; Wang, 2018; Wang & Cheng, 2018;
49 Zheng et al., 2018). Olympic and international sporting success is a method through which
50 the Chinese Government projects its soft power; meaning its cultural power and economic
51 strength (see Nye, 1990; Wilson, 2008), and ideological superiority in today's world (Zheng
52 et al., 2018). The CWNS honours nationalism and collectivism with Olympic champions
53 celebrated as heroines and heroes for the glory they bring to China (Ge et al., 2019; Zheng et
54 al., 2018). The prioritization of Olympic success through sport has meant sport psychology
55 researchers have focused on elite athletes and enhancing sport performance (Hu & Henry,
56 2017; Li & Cuskelly, 2019; Liu et al., 2018; Liu & Lu, 2016; Si et al., 2011; Wang & Cheng,
57 2018; Zhang, Chin et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2018). However, a recent development in the
58 CWNS has been an identified need to better understand aspiring athletes' holistic
59 development. Doing so would further support Chinese athletes as they navigate adversities
60 and crisis transitions characterized by mental, physical, social, and financial challenges. This
61 unfolding recognition has been highlighted by scholars inside and beyond China (Cosh et al.,
62 2020; Ge et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2013; Si et al., 2016; Stambulova, 2003; Stambulova et
63 al., 2009; Stambulova, Ryba et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2017).

64 Athletic careers have been defined outside of China as multi-year periods during
65 which individuals voluntarily engage in one or more sport activities with the aim of achieving
66 peak athletic performance (Stambulova, 1994; Stambulova et al., 2009). An athletic career
67 may occupy up to “one third of the lifespan and influences all aspects of an athlete’s
68 development” (Stambulova, 1994, p. 221) and consist of transitions through various
69 development stages spanning entry into an athletic career and post-career (Battocchio et al.,
70 2015; Mortensen et al., 2013; Ryba, & Stambulova, 2013). There is yet to be consensus
71 among Chinese scholars of how to define an athletic career in terms of its duration.
72 Therefore, we borrow the term “athletic career” from two successive International Society of
73 Sport Psychology Position Stands (see Stambulova et al., 2009; Stambulova, Ryba et al.,
74 2020); reference points already considered by Chinese scholars (e.g., Ge et al., 2019; Huang
75 et al., 2013; Sum et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2017). Based on our understanding of the CWNS
76 and reviewing athletic career literature in Chinese and English (i.e., four of our authors are
77 Chinese), an athletic career has yet to be recognized earlier than the moment a Chinese
78 athlete enters a sport team at a provincial level (first level), through professional or full-time
79 athlete status, to when s/he retires. This chronology characterizes an elite athlete’s career as
80 the point one begins to gain a salary as an employee of China via athletic pursuit. There are,
81 however, amateur and semi-professional athletes who do not receive salary and are not
82 regarded as having an athlete (employee) identity and associated job title as “athlete”. Such
83 athletes are rather, in formation, akin to any other pre-career development. Adding to our
84 understanding of the national sport context, within present Chinese scholarship, much of the
85 writing has emphasized the transitions out of sports as opposed to athletes’ temporal
86 developmental processes (Huang et al., 2013; Li et al., 2015; Li & Wang, 2021).
87 Consequently, there is sparse research where authors have investigated Chinese athletes’
88 challenges and difficulties via stories about their development and transitions throughout

89 their athletic careers, as envisioned from sport entry through career termination. The
90 challenges and difficulties encountered during a span of transitions, such as the junior to
91 senior transition, have not been systematically explored in the Chinese sport context. To
92 better understand Chinese athletes' careers from one stage to the next, it is important to
93 clarify knowledge of athletic careers, regarded as potential occupational careers, via
94 established understandings of career development, the holistic lifespan, and holistic
95 ecological perspectives (see Henriksen et al., 2010; Henriksen et al., 2020; Schinke et al.,
96 2018; Stambulova, Ryba et al., 2020).

97 Bloom (1985) was among the pioneers expanding scientific and practical
98 understandings of athletic careers. He proposed three key stages of athletes' development: (1)
99 initiation stage, (2) development stage, and (3) mastery stage. He posited athletes should be
100 provided appropriate support to face the varying performance foci and expectations of each
101 stage and subsequent transitions as they strive for career excellence. Stambulova (2003)
102 proposed three types of support interventions sport psychology consultants could adopt with
103 athletes, comprised of (1) preventative interventions prior to transitions, (2) effective crisis-
104 coping interventions which may lead to a successful, if delayed, transition, and (3) clinically
105 oriented interventions, should unresolved crisis transitions lead to negative coping
106 behaviours, such as dropout or depression. Wylleman (2019b) also highlighted a holistic
107 athletic career model with the multi-faceted transitions athletes undergo in the athletic,
108 psychological, psycho-social, academic, vocational, financial, and legal aspects of their lives.
109 The resources needed by athletes to navigate the demands and stressors of each sport and
110 non-sport transition has been a focus area in sport and exercise psychology scholarship for
111 more than 30 years (e.g., Kreiner-Phillips & Orlick, 1993; Orlick & Partington, 1988;
112 Stambulova, 2003; Stambulova et al., 2009; Stambulova, Schinke et al., 2020; Taylor &
113 Ogilvie, 1994; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Recently, there has been an emerging focus on

114 national contextualization, leading to idiosyncratic approaches (see Stambulova & Schinke,
115 2017) spurring this submission.

116 As already noted, the importance of providing support to athletes during career
117 transitions has been highlighted in two successive International Society of Sport Psychology
118 (ISSP) Position Stands on Career Development and Transitions of Athletes, the initial one
119 published in 2009 (see Stambulova et al., 2009), revisited in 2020 (see Stambulova, Ryba et
120 al., 2020). A focus in these stands was socio-cultural contexts, embedded within national
121 sport systems, where athletes' careers are undertaken. The authors of both position stands
122 recognized historical and socio-cultural contexts and even geographical locations influenced
123 athletes and sport systems, and also researchers who "select research questions and
124 participants, develop theoretical frameworks and instruments, and interpret their results based
125 on the messages they internalize from these contexts." (Stambulova et al., 2009, p. 399).
126 Therefore, a new paradigm, termed cultural praxis of athletes' careers (see Ryba &
127 Stambulova, 2013; Stambulova & Ryba, 2013; Stambulova, Ryba et al., 2020), which
128 emphasises cultural awareness, reflexivity, and context-driven research and/or practice has
129 been proposed to direct attention to the diversity of athletes, athletes' career development,
130 and transitions both in and out of sport (Stambulova, Ryba et al., 2020). Relatedly, national,
131 and cross-national studies have contributed to the sharing of research topics, theoretical
132 frameworks, and instruments between countries with similar socio-cultural contexts whilst
133 finding culture- specific features in cross-national comparisons (Stambulova et al, 2009).

134 Stambulova and Ryba (2013) also co-edited a book, 'Athletes Careers Across
135 Cultures', providing insight into intervention programs and strategies developed and used by
136 sport psychology consultants from five continents. The book featured chapters written by
137 authors from 19 countries, each revealing the "diversity and different foci in career research
138 and assistance in different countries" (Stambulova & Ryba, 2013, p. 236). The intersection of

139 athletic careers and cultural contexts highlighted the importance of examining national sport
140 systems as locations which help and/or hinder athletes' holistic developments and eventual
141 journeys into post-athletic careers. One chapter in the book pertained to athletes' careers in
142 China, particularly about Chinese athletes' transitions into retirement (Huang et al., 2013).
143 Huang et al. noted retirement was an especially important transition in China, as for many
144 Chinese people success "often means a decent job with a high salary" (Huang et al., 2013, p.
145 67). Ge et al. (2019) extended the chapter by examining Chinese athletes' transitions to
146 retirement through a conceptual overview of the CWNS. The manuscript, co-written with two
147 Olympic Chinese trampoline athletes, was written about socio-cultural factors that impacted
148 athletes' careers and holistic development, psychological issues encountered due to the
149 centralized nature of the CWNS, and the underlying medal-oriented approach guiding athletic
150 careers. The athletes' inclusion as co-authors catalysed an insider's vantage into
151 understanding of Chinese athletes in the CWNS with the world champions' verbatim
152 responses to what was written interspersed throughout the manuscript. However, the authors'
153 focus on successful Olympic athletes and the retirement stages in their careers left much to be
154 understood about personal development in the broader athletic population of Chinese
155 athletes' transitions spanning development stages of China's three-level (i.e., first level,
156 second level, third level) development system (Stambulova, Ryba et al., 2020).

157 **Navigating the CWNS**

158 The CWNS is an adaptation of a sports training system developed in the Soviet Union
159 in the 1950s, modified to reflect Chinese culture since being adopted in the 1980s (Zheng et
160 al., 2018). The development of the CWNS is grounded in a three-level training network
161 which prioritises talent identification and the development of world-class and successful
162 Olympic athletes (Si et al., 2011, 2016; Zheng et al., 2018). There are five characteristics of
163 the CWNS which guide the process of elite athletes' selection, training and competition: (1) a

164 centralized structure of its infrastructure and organization, (2) being medal-orientated and/or
165 politically orientated in valuing nationalism and collectivism, (3) a pyramidal or hierarchical
166 structure of Chinese athletes' training and selecting systems, and competitions, (4) state-
167 control, and (5) a uniform management of resources (Ge et al., 2019; Hong et al., 2005;
168 Zheng et al., 2018). The CWNS encompasses the full range of state activities in sport, such as
169 academic research in sport, management of national governing bodies, facilities, and policy
170 bodies (Hu & Henry, 2017). The state government allocates financial resources to develop
171 sports according to a national strategic plan, and the central government supports demands
172 and costs of sport development, and pays salaries for athletes, coaches, sport scientists, and
173 administrators (Ge et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2018).

174 The CWNS talent identification process is designed to select and enter athletes into
175 the system at the appropriate level. Chinese coaches and sport scientists have utilized several
176 psychological and physiological traits theorized to be an innate part of athletes' potential to
177 predict and discover prospective athletes (Zhao et al., 2019). The effectiveness of the Chinese
178 talent identification system has been supported through success in monitoring and identifying
179 the progress of elite and sub-elite athletes (Tan & Green, 2008). Almost all Chinese athletes
180 who compete internationally have entered and progressed through the selection and training
181 system from an early age. The three-level training network is like the description of the three
182 development stages of athletes in Bloom's (1985) model. Most Chinese athletes start playing
183 sport in school teams in primary and secondary schools when they are ages five to nine (i.e.,
184 the third level), during which sports are an opportunity for play-based encounters and are
185 constructed as a time of discovering the excitement of organized competition and of being a
186 part of a team (Kalinowski, 1985). While in the third level, athletes train two to three hours a
187 day for three or four days a week with a coach and almost all the athletes' costs are borne by
188 their parents. After a period of hard training, some promising athletes will move to the second

189 level which is like the middle years (Kalinowski, 1985) and is the stage when athletes
190 become engrossed in the details of a single sport and invest time to master their sport.
191 Athletes in this level practice a specific sport in sports schools and/or colleges, begin to work
192 with sport scientists and train five to six hours a day, five or six days a week. Some
193 promising young athletes receive financial support, but parents pay for most young athletes'
194 expenses. Additionally, most athletes live on a sport campus and meet their parents on
195 weekends. The first level in the Chinese CWNS is like the later years of childhood and early
196 years of adulthood (Kalinowski, 1985). Most athletes devote their full time and attention to a
197 single sport and become full-time athletes in a provincial or national team. Athletes in the
198 first level train seven to eight hours a day, six days a week, and have access to a wide range
199 of sport scientists. Almost all the costs of full-time athletes are borne by the Chinese
200 Government. First level athletes are tasked with winning medals for China. Hence, they may
201 encounter different pressures, psychological, and career challenges than second or third level
202 athletes. Zhang et al. (2017) also found that Chinese athletes require distinctive coping
203 strategies to deal with types of adversity in the CWNS, and they provided a three-stage
204 adversity coping model for Chinese athletes to describe these adversities met in their career
205 stages as well as coping strategies (see Zhang et al., 2017).

206 **This Project**

207 The General Administration of Sport (GAS) in China recently released a policy in
208 2020 entitled, "Opinions on Deepening the Integration of Sports and Education to Promote
209 the Healthy Development of Youth". The GAS is seeking to refine the CWNS by enhancing
210 athletes' pathways to success as a portion of Chinese athletes, including some champion-
211 athletes, have suffered adverse and/or crisis transitions out of their sports. Sport scientists and
212 policymakers working for the CWNS have recognized the need for ongoing evolution in the
213 CWNS because some difficulties such as a low education level, a strong athletic identity,

214 employment issues, lack of career planning, and a resulting lack of occupational skills, have
215 been found to impede the athletes' post-career lives (Huang et al., 2013; Li et al., 2015; Li &
216 Wang, 2021; Wang, 2008a; Wang, 2008b). To help Chinese athletes avoid crises during and
217 after their transitions out of sport, the GAS (2020b) included pathways to increase the
218 system's focus on non-sport imperatives, such as continuing education, access to
219 employment, and supports related to physical and mental health. Our aim is to further this
220 examination of how the CWNS supports and/or challenges Chinese athletes' holistic
221 development as they progress through their careers in the CWNS.

222 Chinese researchers examining the career transitions in the CWNS have tended to
223 follow the trend in broader career transition scholarship of focusing on understanding
224 successful athletes and environments, meaning that less successful athletes and their crisis
225 transitions remain unheard (Ge et al., 2019; Stambulova, Ryba et al., 2020). Further, the lack
226 of culture-specific knowledge about career transitions and the development of athletes in the
227 CWNS is worthy of exploration as it differs to how athletic careers develop and unfold in
228 European and North American (i.e., Western) countries (Ge et al., 2019). Rather than
229 attempting to control and change adverse events through interventions, Chinese athletes are
230 taught to accept adversity as it occurs and learn to co-exist with the adverse and imperfect
231 situations in their lives (Si et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2017). The focus herein, contextualized
232 through a story written by two former CWNS athletes, though not having achieved the
233 highest level, is on Chinese athletes' transitions as they navigate the CWNS. Further, as Rolfe
234 (2002) wrote "our clients in the helping professions sometimes occupy some very unfamiliar
235 psychological, social and emotional spaces of which most practitioners will have had very
236 little first-hand experience, and this can severely limit the hermeneutic endeavour to
237 understand from the inside." (p. 93). Hence, our reflective tale provides sport psychology

238 consultants and professionals from allied fields with a unique vantage in understanding
239 Chinese athletes' barriers and challenges throughout their athletic careers.

240 To begin, an overview of the CWNS and its three-level training system is provided.
241 The overview is followed by the reflective realist tale. Our objective is to inspire career
242 scholars conducting context-driven research to create culture-specific frameworks, whilst
243 exemplifying how athletic career research can be sociocultural informed in relation to Eastern
244 cultures (Stambulova et al., 2009; Stambulova, Ryba et al., 2020). The paper concludes with
245 a discussion of current developments in the CWNS relevant to key athletic career scholarship
246 perspectives to better understand how the holistic development of Chinese athletes may be
247 fostered through attention to support provided during their transitions into and out of sport.

248 **Two Chinese Athletes' Self-reflective Tale of Life in the CWNS**

249 The following section is a reflective realist tale composed by Author one and Author
250 four (both introduced in first person) aimed at extending athletic career discourse in relation
251 to the CWNS. I (author one) am a 27-year-old male, PhD student, and a former full-time
252 table tennis athlete. Before I retired at the age of 19, I had played table tennis for 13 years. I
253 began my table tennis career at the age of six when I entered the three-level training network
254 (third level), and two years later, I moved to the second level. I stayed at the second level for
255 four years and then moved to the first level. I (author four) am a 30-year-old male, Master
256 student, and a former full-time table tennis athlete. I played table tennis for 15 years and
257 retired at the age of 20. I began my table tennis career at the age of six and moved to the
258 second level at the age of 9. Three years later, I moved to the first level. After we (both
259 authors) retired, we pursued our undergraduate degrees at a top-level university in China, and
260 we are continuing to complete our graduate degrees in Canada. Through the reflective realist
261 tale, our aim is to broaden the scope of research foci beyond performance enhancement in the

262 CWNS (see Si et al., 2016) to include explorations into athletes' successes and setbacks in
263 relation to their time in the CWNS. According to Stambulova, Ryba, and Henriksen (2020),
264 athletes' careers can be explored through narratives which provide an opportunity for
265 understanding idiosyncratic nuances of career development and/or transition pathways. As
266 two former elite table tennis players in the CWNS, the reflections are presented from an
267 emic, unified voice revealing why examining transitions between the three levels is
268 important. Table tennis is touted as China's national sport that was a factor in fostering
269 China's improved international relationships during the early 1970's (Chen et al., 2015).
270 Pursuing a career in table tennis in the CWNS is a particularly challenging task.

271 Reflective practices have been proposed as a manner through which individuals can
272 re-visit their past for technical, practical, and/or critical purposes (Anderson et al., 2004).
273 Reflective tales generate knowledge from past events, in essence through reflection *on* action
274 rather than *in* action (D'Cruz et al., 2007). Schinke and colleagues (2012) also advocated for
275 reflective practices as a method through which cultural diversity issues in sport may be
276 brought to the fore. Aligned with the realist nature of this paper, the tale is presented to
277 provide readers with a descriptive contextualised account of athletes' stories in the CWNS
278 (Hopper et al., 2008). Realist tales are often author-evacuated. However, we write the
279 following tale from the vantage of being authorities of our (author one and four) own words
280 (Sparkes, 2002). Having first-hand knowledge of life as a table-tennis player in the CWNS is
281 a unique resource permitting an in-depth portrayal of how the CWNS can support and/or
282 hinder athletes' careers. The following questions guided our (author one and four) reflections
283 used to compose the tale: (a) How do you describe your career development and transitions in
284 the CWNS, and (b) How did the CWNS influence your athletic career development and
285 transitions in different stages? We documented our reflections on these two questions in a
286 reflective journal. Further, several discussions were had with parents, coaches and (former)

287 teammates which further enriched the reflections. Based on our similar career development
288 goals (e.g., becoming a coach and/or sport scholar, leaning English, studying abroad, and
289 pursuing a graduate degree) and the common challenges we faced during our careers, we
290 synthesised our two accounts into a singular composite story about an aspiring athlete's
291 transitions through the CWNS up to retirement. However, the reflective tale, considering
292 how few Chinese full-time athletes continue pursuing a Ph.D. abroad, is also a non-typical
293 story as compared with other Chinese former athletes.

294 **Third Level: The Early Years**

295 I am a single child from middle-income family. When I was six years old, I watched a
296 table tennis match on the television and was instantly interested. I was amazed at how the
297 athletes could control the ball with their table tennis rackets, and the speed they hit ball and
298 move. I first joined the CWNS by joining an after-school table tennis club. My coach of the
299 school affiliated team thought I was a talented table tennis player and told my parents to send
300 me to a professional club. My try out for the team was more competitive than any
301 competition I had previously been in. After I tried out for the team, the coach wanted me to
302 join right away. I was surprised by how supportive my parents were. They thought the best
303 way for me to explore my athletic potential was by joining the club and so I left my
304 hometown and travelled to Shanghai to practice table tennis by myself. At this level in the
305 CWNS I was joining a school classified as one with a sport tradition. I joined the school as a
306 novice athlete and my parents had to support me by paying for my expensive tuition, training,
307 and living expenses. My table tennis skills improved rapidly, and my academic record was
308 excellent because I regarded myself as a student-athlete. During this time, I primarily
309 identified myself as a student; my primary mission was academic learning as opposed to
310 practicing table tennis. During my novice years, I took part in many tournaments and got

311 excellent results. Two years later, I was one of the top two players in my age group in
312 Shanghai, giving me the opportunity to sign and move up to the city team.

313 **Second Level: The Middle Years**

314 I transferred to another school with two teammates when I entered the second level of
315 the CWNS. The school I joined was an elite sport college in the CWNS. I began to engage in
316 semi-professional training, during which I was in school during the morning and practicing
317 table tennis in the afternoons and evenings five days a week. I represented the city in
318 provincial tournaments and received a tuition and training fees waiver. Shifting focus to my
319 performance as a table tennis player required me spend less time studying for school as I
320 travelled and competed in tournaments across the country. As the intensity level of training
321 increased, I had to deal with a variety of injuries including swelling in the knee joint, tibial
322 tuberosity epiphysis, and other knee, wrist, shoulder, and ankle injuries. These physical
323 injuries were accompanied by re-injury and pre-competition anxiety. The sole support
324 provided to me during times of injury in this phase was from a general hospital doctor. I
325 could not access the expertise of conditioning coaches, sport psychology consultants,
326 dieticians, and sport physiotherapists who could have helped me.

327 My spate of injuries caused me to worry that coaches would perceive me as a weak
328 athlete because of my physical and psychological impairments and that it might cause them
329 to limit my tournament participation. Additionally, coaches had the right to decide who could
330 transfer to the next phase. These worries meant I did not want to show any limitations and so
331 I continued to practice with a severe sport injury. In Chinese culture, perseverance is a noble
332 character, and I also wanted to show coaches that I had this character. When I encountered
333 some adversities, my first reaction was that I should persevere rather than how to solve it.

334 As I advanced through the second phase, and my parents and I began to focus more
335 on performance, my identity gradually shifted from student-athlete to athlete-student. My

336 priority was to have good table tennis performance rather than have a good academic record
337 which led to a decline in academics. The increased focus on performance and transitioning to
338 the next phase also resulted in increased pre-competition anxiety. On the other hand, for
339 Chinese people, filial piety is very important. I did not want to let my parents down and make
340 them unhappy. Therefore, it also increased my anxiety and caused the overtraining. I over-
341 focused on results, but at that time, I did not realize it. I thought I just was not good enough,
342 forcing me to train harder. The over training led to further injuries and anxiety. However, I
343 was still ranked top five in my city and had a chance to progress to the next phase.

344 **First Level: The Later Years**

345 I progressed to the provincial team when I entered the of the CWNS. During this
346 phase, I did not have to pay any fees and I received a salary from the Government. I began to
347 train as a professional which meant table tennis training in the morning and afternoon six
348 days a week, and academic learning only in the evening three days a week. I felt increased
349 pressure to perform due to the increasingly high competition performance requirements and
350 my parents' expectations. I almost gave up my academic learning to put my energy into
351 training and competitions. My identity was a full-time professional athlete. When I went to
352 school, it was a time for me to relax. Viewing myself only as an athlete increased my stress
353 as it meant I needed to achieve success in my sport career – there was no fallback plan
354 because I gave up my academic learning. If I could not achieve success in a sport career, it
355 would make my life more difficult. Further, keeping face is significant in Chinese culture. If I
356 did not succeed in either academic and sport career, my parents would be perceived as losers
357 and lose their face in their social network. I was afraid to lose my parents' face because filial
358 piety is important for me.

359 My increased psychological pressure was also due to my realization that at this level I
360 not only represented myself, but also my province because I was taught from childhood that

361 the collective honour is more important than individual honour. I was also afraid to let my
362 coach down and lose our face. I craved the feeling of being successful for others, not just for
363 me. The more I wanted to win, the more I focused on the result and the worse I performed.
364 The need to win was also related to competitions with teammates. The chances of getting to
365 the national team were very low; even positions to attend inter-provincial competitions were
366 limited and so if I wanted to play in tournaments, I had to beat my teammates. I also
367 continued to worry about injury affecting my performance. All these worries were
368 compounded by my fear of disappointing my parents, coaches, and teammates due to being
369 unsuccessful.

370 My table tennis skills during this time were still very good. Despite not playing well
371 because I feared competition, I was still good enough to beat most of the other players on my
372 team and earn a temporary training place with the junior national team. However, my time
373 with the junior national team only lasted for a few months. Training with the team was
374 always intense and I re-injured my knee which required surgery and a minimum one-year
375 recovery period. During my recovery I began to consider what my future held. I thought that
376 although I knew I was talented at table tennis, my pursuit of a professional career would be
377 filled with uncertainty. I also knew that I would have to retire and transition to a post-playing
378 career. I felt that the sooner I transitioned to a post-playing career the more time and
379 opportunities I would have available to me. After weighing my options, I made the difficult
380 decision to retire and return to my provincial team as an assistant coach.

381 **Retirement**

382 When my identity changed from athlete to coach, I reflected on my career as a table
383 tennis player. I realised it was not my physical abilities, technique, or talent, but rather my
384 inability to cope with competition anxiety and the psychological impact of being injured
385 which impacted my performance in competition. I began to observe whether the athletes I

386 coached exhibited similar issues performing in competition as opposed to practice. I also
387 began to ask them about issues they felt impacted their performance in competition to see if
388 they experienced similar problems as I had. During my discussion with the athletes, I realised
389 that, for those who did struggle in competition, I did not have the knowledge I needed to help
390 them solve these problems. Around the same time, I had begun to think about going back to
391 university which would help me to have a comfortable life. My lack of knowledge about how
392 to help the athletes motivated me to register in a sports training major program at university
393 where I would learn how to help young athletes.

394 My return to education was not an easy transition, and it meant having to re-define
395 my identity as a student. Having shifted focus away from education during my middle years
396 when I focused more on table tennis, I found university-level courses difficult. I barely
397 understood what the professors were trying to teach in some classes. I felt ashamed when I
398 was being called upon to answer questions because many times I did not know what to say
399 that made me lose my face in front of my classmates. I also found what I studied was not
400 what I wanted to know, which was how to help athletes cope with psychological challenges
401 during their athletic careers. Sports psychology was not the main course in my university, so I
402 wrote my thesis under the guidance of a professor without really understanding the
403 knowledge I wanted to understand. However, I did learn how to speak English which meant
404 after I graduated, I could move to another country and study sport psychology. Now I
405 consider myself a successful person, in part due to my current position as a Ph.D. student.
406 Further, in China, high-educational level can be perceived as one's success and also parental
407 achievement. My parents are proud of my position as a PhD student because in their social
408 network, people will regard my parents as successful and outstanding. Therefore, my success
409 can help my parents keep their face. I describe myself as a Chinese international sport
410 scholar. My aim as a graduate student is to explore how to help Chinese athletes achieve

411 excellence in their chosen careers and manage the barriers and problems that they may
412 encounter during their career transitions.

413 **Exploring Potential Strengths and Challenges of the CWNS**

414 The realist tale above, reflecting the voices of two authors, provides unique insights
415 into the impact of social-cultural contexts and environments on athletes' career development
416 and transitions. Contextualizing how Chinese culture and social contexts influence athletes'
417 developmental journeys imparts further understanding of how Chinese athletes' career
418 transitions are shaped by the strengths and/or limitations of their sport environments
419 (Stambulova & Ryba, 2013). The story also furthers insights found in the two ISSP Position
420 Stands (Stambulova et al., 2009; Stambulova, Ryba et al., 2020) by bringing greater
421 understanding through the vantage of insiders, to the significance and impact of national
422 sport systems on (non-Olympic) athletes' career development and transitions. Moreover, the
423 story also offers sport psychology practitioners and other professionals working with athletes
424 an opportunity to vicariously engage with the various career transitions through the CWNS as
425 they move toward an affective understanding of the words shared by athletes during these
426 difficult times (Rolfe, 2002). The story is also unique in that the affective understanding
427 provided is in relation to adverse and difficult career transitions of non-Olympic Chinese
428 athletes whose voices have yet to be evoked. The following section provides a
429 complementary examination of the strengths and limitations of the CWNS and how these
430 relate to Chinese athletes' careers, as well as athletic career research conducted in China
431 (Huang et al., 2013; Si et al., 2015; Si et al., 2016).

432 The strength of the CWNS is underpinned by the resources (e.g., financial support,
433 human resources) mobilized, and policies developed, to support elite athletes' pursuits of
434 success in international sport competitions, achieved primarily through the centralised CWNS
435 management system (Ge et al., 2019; Hu & Henry, 2017; Ma, 2018; Wang, 2018; Zheng et

436 al., 2018). The CWNS provides many advantages, including premier training environments,
437 high level coaches, advanced sport equipment, and logistical support to help athletes reach
438 peak performance in international sport competitions (Ge et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2018). As
439 revealed in the vignette, once athletes reach the first level, financial issues cease to be a factor
440 and athletes are encouraged to focus exclusively on training and competition (Hong et al.,
441 2005; Hu & Henry, 2017; Si et al., 2016; Zhang, Xiong et al., 2019).

442 Financial barriers are, however, one limitation in the CWNS for some prospective
443 athletes from remote regions in China who are still working to reach the highest level of
444 sporting success. Training and transportation fees, sport equipment, and the expense of
445 finding coaches are costs which are difficult due to athletes' families financial status. A
446 further limitation in the CWNS is the limited academic career support and professional
447 resources available to athletes prior to first level status, such as sports psychologists, sports
448 nutritionists, sports physiotherapists, sports therapists, and strength and conditioning coaches
449 (Hu & Henry, 2017; Jiang, 2007; Li et al., 2020). The prioritization of collective honour in
450 Chinese culture through success at international sport events has meant the CWNS primarily
451 directs financial and human resources to athletes believed to be capable of winning gold
452 medals. The provision of professional and support resources to young athletes at an early
453 stage has not been a prominent feature of the CWNS. As shown through the reflective tale, a
454 lack of professional resources and support systems in place to help young athletes cope with
455 adversity and career transitions can have negative consequences including drop out from
456 sport, overtraining, injuries, low educational levels, reduced sport enjoyment, premature sport
457 dropout, sacrificing other careers (e.g., education, occupation), and alcohol/substance abuse
458 (Schinke et al., 2018; Shi & Wang, 2006; Stambulova et al., 2009; Tong, 2014; Yang et al.,
459 2004). For one of the authors, the lack of professional resources and support provided during
460 an injury and difficult career transition into the first level stage resulted in overtraining, a

461 protracted recovery time, and reduced academic learning time. Consequently, not only did he
462 not achieve his life goal of becoming an Olympic champion, but he also suffered a difficult
463 transition out of sport and into academic life at a university.

464 The limitations of the CWNS have begun to garner attention from the Chinese
465 government and as a result several policies have been issued in recent years to help guide the
466 further evolution and development of support systems for athletes. Recently released policies
467 have focused on the development of supports for athlete education, career planning, mental
468 health, and multiple development pathways (see GAS, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; GAS, 2019;
469 GAS, 2020b). The recent guidance policy issued by the GAS in September 2020 furthered
470 the integration of sports and education to promote the healthy development of youth. The
471 policy also drew focus to the development of athletes in and out of sport by encouraging
472 exploration for the potential of multiple development pathways, not only those of national
473 team athletes. Emphasis was also placed on accelerating the construction of physical
474 education and sport institutions and disciplines to improve sport science research, scientific
475 training methods and to increase the number of high-level of coaches and sport scientists.
476 Resources have also been developed to encourage retired athletes to seek further education so
477 as to support effective transitions into post-athletic careers, including making university
478 courses more accessible by reducing admission standards. Support systems have also been
479 put into place to help athletes gain employment in the CWNS as coaches, teachers, and
480 managers.

481 Research into dual career (DC) athletes has provided some basis for recent CWNS
482 policies (see Brandt et al., 2018; Cartigny et al., 2021; Nikander et al., 2020; Tessitore et al.,
483 2021; Wylleman et al., 2018), with some key distinctions. A main focus in most (DC)
484 approaches is on the difficulty of combining the desire to excel at an elite level in sport with
485 other life domains (e.g., education, occupation, social life) and the challenges of simultaneous

486 transitions between sport and other life domains (Ryba et al., 2015; Stambulova &
487 Wylleman, 2015). The aim of recommendations developed through DC research is often to
488 provide insights into the forms of support which can further the holistic development of
489 athletes through the provision of professional educational, occupational, psychosocial, and
490 financial assistance (Defruyt et al., 2021; Ryba et al., 2015; Stambulova & Wylleman, 2015).
491 Further, supportive interventions are conducted at various stages in athletes' careers to reduce
492 negative transition impacts, enhance athletes' DC competencies, and safeguard athletes'
493 employability (Ryba et al., 2017; Sum et al., 2017; Wylleman et al., 2018).

494 Recent CWNS policies and the development of career transition interventions
495 similarly combine support in both elite sport and education domains; however, in a slightly
496 different and unique approach. CWNS policies and interventions emphasize providing
497 support to retired athletes or athletes at a later stage in the CWNS. The focus on late-career
498 athletes suggests the current emphasis in CWNS policies is on athletes' transitions out of
499 sport, with athletes not expected to focus on sport and education careers simultaneously.
500 Current CWNS policies also aim to transition retired athletes into sport science focused
501 educational avenues further aiding the development of sport in China. Drawing upon retired
502 athletes' expertise is further emphasised by the trend of retired Chinese athletes transitions
503 from athletic careers directly into other roles in the CWNS (e.g., coaches, sport managers,
504 physical education teachers, sport scholars). The close relationship and co-operation between
505 education and sport systems in China enables the transitions of elite athletes into sport-related
506 education and relevant jobs by tapping their expertise (Li et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2018; Lu &
507 Li, 2011; Stambulova et al., 2009; Zhang, 2017; Zhang, Chin et al., 2019).

508 The development of recent CWNS policies is due to Chinese policymakers and sport
509 scholars responding to the crisis transitions faced by some Chinese athletes which have led to
510 a negative impact on their holistic development in and out of sport (Li & Cuskelly, 2019; Ma

511 & Kurscheidt, 2021; Zhang et al., 2017). The recent emphasis on the importance of
512 education, career planning, mental health, multiple development pathways, and overall
513 development for Chinese athletes, also matches with recent athletic career scholarship which
514 has shown the importance of supporting athletes holistically, through the development of
515 non-athletic identities and provision of interventions to support athlete's during career
516 transitions (Knights et al., 2016; Nam et al., 2019; Park et al., 2013; Stambulova, Ryba et al.,
517 2020). The recent policies also reveal how CWNS administrators are beginning to prioritise
518 the holistic development of Chinese athletes through the provision of educational avenues of
519 development; however, as shown through the vignette, the policy of supporting DC as
520 subsequent endeavours rather than concurrent endeavours leaves some athletes facing
521 difficult transitions upon retirement. What is evident is that policy makers are drawing upon
522 international career transition scholarship, such as recommendations made by Wylleman
523 (2019a), in an idiosyncratic and culturally saturated manner in the provision of resources to
524 support athletes' transitions and holistic development.

525 The broader Chinese cultural context in which most people born between 1980 and
526 2015 were single children due to the Chinese single-child policy at that time provides insight
527 into one way career transition policies have necessarily been culturally shaped. Many
528 Chinese elite athletes live with their coaches and peers on a sport campus from an early age
529 (Ge et al., 2019; Si et al., 2016). The lack of familial presence during the mastery stage at the
530 psychosocial level, as outlined in Wylleman's (2019b) model, means young athletes often
531 turn to coaches and peers for support due to a lack of access to their parents and siblings.
532 Problematically, young Chinese athletes may fear making mistakes in front of, being
533 criticised by, and seeking help from coaches due to expectation in Chinese culture of having
534 respect for, and obeying, their elders' authority (Ge et al., 2019; Si et al., 2015). The lack of
535 personal support networks and lack of professional support services prior to athletes reaching

536 the first level can negatively impact young athletes' development and can also result in
537 overtraining, injuries, reduced enjoyment in sport, and dropout from sport. As revealed in the
538 vignette, the sole focus on sport can also negatively impact young athletes who drop out from
539 sport and lack support systems to aid in re-engaging with their education and/or seeking
540 meaningful employment. As such, there remains the need for development of support
541 resources for athletes who fail in competing internationally for China.

542 **Conclusion**

543 The current manuscript is a contextualized example of how athletic career research
544 influences and is put into practice in the CWNS and broader Chinese socio-cultural context.
545 The inclusion of emic and etic lenses of how the CWNS is developing to better provide
546 support to athletes during career transitions provides unique insights into the culturally
547 saturated and idiographic challenges faced by Chinese athletes during their career transitions
548 and their post-athletic careers. The reflective tale provides some common issues and
549 challenges Chinese athletes' may face during their careers. We urge readers to further
550 consider the idiosyncratic ways in which the CWNS may influence Chinese athletes' career
551 development and transitions. Our (author one and author four) career developments and
552 successful transitions out of sports are inevitably our own. The vignette therefore is just one
553 example of how Chinese athletes in the CWNS may successfully transition out of sport. Our
554 hope is that our reflective tale provides sports psychology practitioners working with Chinese
555 athletes with an affective understanding of how they may provide support during difficult and
556 adverse time of transition, and moreover, encourage further athletes to reflect on their
557 idiosyncratic pathways through the transitional process to the post-career.

558 Contrastingly, there are also several elite Chinese athletes whose stories about
559 maladaptive transitions into society after retirement, characterised by mental, physical, and
560 financial challenges (e.g., Chunlan Zou, Shangwu Zhang, and Li Cai), have drawn the

561 public's attention in China. Elite Chinese athletes face not only the challenge of multiple
562 career transitions, but also the task of developing non-athletic identities in a context designed
563 to help them focus solely on sport. Therefore, sport psychology professionals and
564 policymakers should explore and understand athletes' career development processes and
565 transitions holistically, considering holistic lifespan and holistic ecological perspectives (see
566 Henriksen et al., 2010; Henriksen et al., 2020; Schinke et al., 2018; Stambulova, Ryba et al.,
567 2020). These two approaches have yet to be explored in relation to the nuanced ways in
568 which Chinese athletes in different development pathways and stages may be provided
569 support to help them strive toward career and post-career excellence.

570

References

- 571 Anderson, A. G., Knowles, Z., & Gilbourne, D. (2004). Reflective practice for sport
572 psychologists: Concepts, models, practical implications, and thoughts on
573 dissemination. *The Sport Psychologist*, *18*(2), 188-203.
574 <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.18.2.188>
- 575 Battochio, R. C., Stambulova, N. B., & Schinke, R. J. (2015). Stages and demands in the
576 careers of Canadian National Hockey League players. *Journal of Sports
577 Sciences*, *34*(3), 278–288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2015.1048523>
- 578 Bloom, B. S. (1985). *Developing talent in young people*. Ballantine Books.
- 579 Brandt, K. D., Wylleman, P., Torregrossa, M., Veldhoven, N. S., Minelli, D., Defruyt, S., &
580 Knop, P. D. (2018). Exploring the factor structure of the Dual Career Competency
581 Questionnaire for athletes in European pupil- and student-athletes, *International
582 Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *1*(1), 1-18.
583 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2018.1511619>
- 584 Cartigny, E., Fletcher, D., Coupland, C., & Taylor, G. (2021). Mind the gap: A grounded
585 theory of dual career pathways in sport, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *33*(3),
586 280-301, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2019.1654559>
- 587 Chen, Y-W., Tan, T-C., & Lee P-C. (2015). The Chinese government and the globalization of
588 table tennis: A case study in local responses to the globalization of sport. *The
589 International Journal of the History of Sport*, *32*(10), 1336-1348.
590 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523357.2015.1036239>
- 591 Cosh, S. M., McNeil, D. G., & Tully, P. J. (2020). Poor mental health outcomes in crisis
592 transitions: an examination of retired athletes accounting of crisis transition
593 experiences in a cultural context, *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*,
594 *13*(5), 1-20. DOI:10.1080/2159676X.2020.1765852

- 595 D’Cruz, H., Gillingham, P., & Melendez, S. (2007). Reflexivity, its meanings and relevance
596 for social work: A critical review of the literature. *British Journal of Social Work*,
597 37(1), 73-90. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcl001>
- 598 Defruyt, S., Wylleman, P., Stambulova, N. B., Cecić Erpič, S., Graczyk, M. & De Brandt, K.
599 (2021). Competencies of dual career support providers (DCSPs): A scenario-specific
600 perspective, *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 19(1), 43-60,
601 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2019.1655773>
- 602 Ge, Y., Schinke, R. J., Dong, D., Lu, C., Si, G., & Oghene, O. (2019). Working with Chinese
603 Olympic athletes in their national sport system: From the conceptual to a proposed
604 research–practice integration. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise*
605 *Psychology*, 17(1), 5–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197x.2016.1164227>
- 606 General Administration of Sport of China. (2018a). *Notice on the Guidance on Further*
607 *Strengthening the Academic Education and Safeguarding of Athletes*.
608 https://zfwf.sport.gov.cn/policy_detail.html?id=191959
- 609 General Administration of Sport of China. (2018b). *Opinions on Further Improving the*
610 *Employment and Resettlement of Retired Athletes*.
611 https://zfwf.sport.gov.cn/policy_detail.html?id=191996
- 612 General Administration of Sport of China. (2018c). *Opinions on Further Improving the*
613 *Support of National Excellent Athletes*.
614 https://zfwf.sport.gov.cn/policy_detail.html?id=193412
- 615 General Administration of Sport of China. (2019). *Notice on Measures for the Administration*
616 *of Academic Testing of Athletes before the National Youth Sport Competition*.
617 https://zfwf.sport.gov.cn/policy_detail.html?id=308184
- 618 General Administration of Sport of China. (2020a). *Olympic champion, world champion and*
619 *world record over the years*. <http://www.sport.gov.cn/n318/n360/n417/index.html>

- 620 General Administration of Sport of China. (2020b). *Opinions on Deepening the Integration*
621 *of sports and education to Promote the Healthy Development of Youth*.
622 <http://www.sport.gov.cn/n10503/c963639/content.html>
- 623 Henriksen, K., Stambulova, N. B., & Roessler, K. K. (2010). Holistic approach to athletic
624 talent development environments: A successful sailing milieu. *Psychology of Sport*
625 *and Exercise, 11*(3), 212–222. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2009.10.005>
- 626 Henriksen, K., Storm, L. K., Kuettel, A., Linnér, L., & Stambulova, N. B. (2020). A holistic
627 ecological approach to sport and study: The case of an athlete friendly university in
628 Denmark. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 47*(1). Article Number 101637.
629 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2019.101637>
- 630 Hong, F., Wu, P., & Xiong, H. (2005). Beijing ambitions: An analysis of the Chinese elite
631 sports system and its Olympic strategy for the 2008 Olympic games, *The*
632 *International Journal of the History of Sport, 22*(4), 510 – 529.
633 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523360500126336>
- 634 Hopper, T. F., Madill, L. E., Bratseth, C. D., Cameron, K. A., Coble, J. D., & Nimmon, L. E.
635 (2008). Multiple voices in health, sport, recreation, and physical education: Revealing
636 unfamiliar spaces in a polyvocal review of qualitative research genres. *Quest, 60*(2),
637 214-235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2008.10483578>
- 638 Hu, R. X., & Henry, I. (2017). Reform and maintenance of Juguo Tizhi: Governmental
639 management discourse of Chinese elite sport. *European Sport Management*
640 *Quarterly, 17*(4), 531-553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2017.1304433>
- 641 Huang, Z., Chen, M., & Qiao, N. (2013). Athletes' careers in China: Advances in athletic
642 retirement research and assistance. In N. Stambulova & T.V. Ryba (Eds.), *Athletes'*
643 *careers across cultures* (pp. 65-76). Routledge.

- 644 Jiang, Z. (2007). Opportunities and challenges facing Chinese sports science and technology
645 in preparing for Olympic Games. *Journal of Wuhan Institute of Physical Education*,
646 41(1), 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.15930/j.cnki.wtxb.2007.01.002>
- 647 Kalinowski, A. G. (1985). The development of Olympic swimmers. In B. S. Bloom (Eds),
648 *Developing talent in young people* (139-193). Ballantine books.
- 649 Kreiner-Phillips, K., & Orlick, T. (1993). Winning after winning: The psychology of ongoing
650 excellence. *The Sport Psychologist*, 7(1), 31–48. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.7.1.31>
- 651 Knights, S., Sherry, E., & Ruddock, H. M. (2016). Investigating elite end-of-athletic-career
652 transition: A systematic review. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 28(3), 291-308.
653 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2015.1128992>
- 654 Li, K., & Cuskelly, G. (2019). Evolution and reformation of sport governance in China. In M.
655 Winand & C. Anagnostopoulos (Eds.), *Research handbook on sport governance* (pp.
656 151-167). Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786434821.00017>
- 657 Li, Q., Ji, L., & Yu, Y. Q. (2014). Transformation and employment: Resettlement situation of
658 retired athletes of Shaanxi, Jiangsu, Shanghai in China. *Journal of Shenyang Sport*
659 *University*, 33(1), 42-46. <http://qikan.cqvip.com/Qikan/Article/Detail?id=49307718>
- 660 Liu, M., Wang, R., Gao, L., & Zhou, J. (2018). The evolution, development, and trend
661 outlook of retired athletes under the New National System. *Journal of Nanjing Sports*
662 *Institute*, 1(9), 32-38. <http://qikan.cqvip.com/Qikan/Article/Detail?id=7001011283>
- 663 Liu, Z., & Lu, Y. (2016). Re-Employment of Retired Athletes in China. *The International*
664 *Journal of the History of Sport*, 33(5), 624–633.
665 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2016.1188083>
- 666 Li, Y., Han, J., Zhang, Q., Wang, P., Xu, F., Yu, H., Chen, L., Wang, X., Wang, R., Liu, T.,
667 Li, F., Liu, H., Yang, X., Chen, C., Yin, X., Cao, X., Yi, Q., Wang, D., Sun, Y., ...
668 Yang, D. (2020). China's urgent need for sports science scientization: Young sports

- 669 scholars' consensus. *Journal of Shanghai University of Sport*, 44(2): 39-52,
670 <https://doi.org/10.16099/j.sus.2020.02.005>
- 671 Li, Y. R., Qian. J. X., & Niu. C. (2015). Research on the Social Support of Athletes' Career
672 Transition in China: A Literature Review. *International Business and Management*,
673 11(3), 50-56, DOI:10.3968/7924
- 674 Li, Y & Wang, L. (2021) What Factors Determine the Success or Failure of 'Cross-Border'
675 Career Development of Chinese Retired Olympic Champions? A Qualitative
676 Comparative Analysis, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 38(7), 779-
677 804, DOI: 10.1080/09523367.2021.1953993
- 678 Lu, Z., & Li, B. (2011). Dialectically ponder on elite athlete exempt from taking an
679 examination entry university. *Journal of Nanjing Institute of Physical Education*
680 *(Social Science)*,25(2), 12-16.
681 <http://qikan.cqvip.com/Qikan/Article/Detail?id=37941606>
- 682 Ma, D. (2018). Analysis and inspiration of elite sports management system of UK, USA and
683 Russia. *Journal of Tianjin University of Sport* 33(6), 516-521.
684 <https://doi.org/10.13297/j.cnki.issn1005-0000.2018.06.009>
- 685 Ma, Y., & Kurscheidt, M. (2021). Modifying tradition: Understanding organizational change
686 in Chinese elite sport training at the grassroots level. *Sustainability*, 13(7), 4048.
687 <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su13074048>.
- 688 Mortensen, J., Henriksen, K., & Stelter, R. (2013). Tales from the future: A narrative
689 investigation of the imagined career paths of young athletes. *Sport Science*
690 *Review*, 22(5-6), 305–327. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ssr-2013-0015>
- 691 Nam, B. H., Shin, Y. H., Jung, K. S., Kim, J., & Nam, S. (2019). Promoting knowledge
692 economy, human capital, and dual careers of athletes: A critical approach to the
693 global sports talent development project in South Korea. *International Journal of*

- 694 *Sport Policy and Politics*, 11(4), 607-624.
695 <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2019.1615974>
- 696 Nikander, J. A. O., Ronkainen, N. J., Korhonen, N., Saarinen, M., & Ryba, T. V. (2020).
697 From athletic talent development to dual career development? A case study in a
698 Finnish high-performance sports environment, *International Journal of Sport and*
699 *Exercise Psychology*, 1(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2020.1854822>
- 700 Nye, J. (1990). Soft Power. *Foreign Policy*, (80), 153-171. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580>
- 701 Orlick, T., & Partington, J. (1988). Mental links to excellence. *The Sport Psychologist*, 2(2),
702 105–130. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2.2.105>
- 703 Park, S., Lavalley, D., & Tod, D. (2013). Athletes' career transition out of sport: A systematic
704 review. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 6(1), 22-53.
705 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2012.687053>
- 706 Rolfe, G. (2002). A lie that helps us see the truth': Research, truth and fiction in the helping
707 professions. *Reflective Practice*, 3(1), 89-102.
708 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940220129898>
- 709 Ryba, T. V., & Stambulova, N. B. (2013). The turn towards a culturally informed approach to
710 career research and assistance in sport psychology. In N. Stambulova & T.V. Ryba
711 (Eds.), *Athletes' careers across cultures* (pp. 1-16). Routledge.
- 712 Ryba, T. V., Stambulova, N. B., Ronkainen, N. J., Bundgaard, J., & Selänne, H. (2015). Dual
713 career pathways of transnational athletes, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 21(1),
714 125-134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.06.002>.
- 715 Ryba, T. V., Stambulova, N. B., Selänne, H., Aunola, K., & Nurmi, J.-E. (2017). “Sport has
716 always been first for me” but “all my free time is spent doing homework”: Dual
717 career styles in late adolescence. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 33(1), 131–140.
718 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.08.011>

- 719 Schinke, R.J., McGannon, K., Parham, W., & Lane, A. (2012). Toward cultural praxis and
720 cultural sensitivity: Strategies for self-reflexive sport psychology practice. *Quest*,
721 64(1), 34-46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2012.653264>
- 722 Schinke, R.J., Stambulova, N. B., Si, G., & Moore, Z. (2018). International society of sport
723 psychology position stand: Athletes' mental health, performance, and development.
724 *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 16(6), 622-639.
725 <http://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2017.1295557>
- 726 Shi, Y., & Wang, W. (2006). Model, method, and application of psychological intervention in
727 competitive sports. *Journal of Chengdu Sport University*, 32(3), 99-105.
728 https://en.cnki.com.cn/Article_en/CJFDTotal-SORT200603026.htm
- 729 Si, G., Duan, Y., Li, H. Y., & Jiang, H. (2011). An exploration into socio-cultural meridians
730 of Chinese athletes' psychological training. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*,
731 5(4), 325-338. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1123/jcsp.5.4.325>
- 732 Si, G., Duan, Y., Li, H. Y., Zhang, C. Q., & Su, N. (2015). The influence of the Chinese sport
733 system and Chinese cultural characteristics on Olympic sport psychology services.
734 *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 17(1), 56-67.
735 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.08.008>.
- 736 Si, G., Li, H., & Chen, B. (2016). China. In R. J. Schinke, K. R. McGannon, & B. Smith
737 (Eds.), *Routledge international handbook of sport psychology* (pp. 36-46). Routledge.
738 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315777054>
- 739 Sparkes, A. C. (2002). *Telling tales in sport and physical activity: A qualitative journey*.
740 Human Kinetics.
- 741 Stambulova, N. B. (1994). Developmental sports career investigations in Russia: A post-
742 perestroika analysis. *The Sport Psychologist*, 8(3), 221-237.
743 <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.8.3.221>

- 744 Stambulova, N. B. (2003). Symptoms of a crisis-transition: A grounded theory study. In N.
745 Hassmén (Ed.), *SIPF Yearbook 2003* (pp. 97–109). Örebro: Örebro University Press.
- 746 Stambulova, N. B., Alfermann, D., Statler, T., & Côté, J. (2009). ISSP Position stand: Career
747 development and transitions of athletes. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise*
748 *Psychology*, 7(4), 395–412. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197x.2009.9671916>
- 749 Stambulova, N. B. & Ryba, T. V. (2013). *Athletes' careers across cultures*. Routledge.
- 750 Stambulova, N. B., Ryba, T. V., & Henriksen, K. (2020). Career development and transitions
751 of athletes: The International Society of Sport Psychology position stand
752 revisited. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. Advanced online
753 publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197x.2020.1737836>
- 754 Stambulova, N., & Schinke, R. J. (2017). Experts focus on the context: Postulates derived
755 from the authors' shared experience and wisdom. *Journal of Sport Psychology in*
756 *Action*, 8(1), 131-134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520704.2017.1308715>
- 757 Stambulova, N. B., Schinke, R. J., Lavalley, D., & Wylleman, P. (2020). The COVID-19
758 pandemic and Olympic/Paralympic athletes' developmental challenges and
759 possibilities in times of a global crisis-transition. *International Journal of Sport and*
760 *Exercise Psychology*. Advanced online publication.
761 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197x.2020.1810865>
- 762 Stambulova, N. B. & Wylleman, P. (2015). Dual career development and transitions,
763 *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 21(1), 1-3.
764 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.05.003>.
- 765 Sum, R. K. W., Tsai, H.-H., Ha, A. S. C., Cheng, C.-F., Wang, F.-J., & Li, M. (2017). Social-
766 Ecological determinants of elite student athletes' Dual Career development in Hong
767 Kong and Taiwan. *SAGE Open*, 7(2), 215824401770779.
768 <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017707798>

- 769 Tan, T. C., & Green, M. (2008). Analyzing China's drive for Olympic success in 2008. *The*
770 *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25(3), 314-338.
771 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523360701739804>
- 772 Taylor, J., & Ogilvie, B. C. (1994). A conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among
773 athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 6(1), 1–20.
774 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413209408406462>
- 775 Tessitore, A., Capranica, L., Pesce, C., De Bois, N., Gjaka, M., Warrington, G.,
776 MacDonncha, C., & Doupona, M. (2021). Parents about parenting dual career
777 athletes: A systematic literature review, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 53(1),
778 101833. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2020.101833>.
- 779 Tong, Q. (2014). Review on Retired Athlete Research in China. *China Sport Science and*
780 *Technology*, 50(3), 132-138.
781 <http://www.cqvip.com/qk/83653x/201403/49585656.html>
- 782 Wang, J. (2008a). A Qualitative Psychological Analysis of the Retirement Process of
783 Athletes: Successful and Unsuccessful Case Studies. *Acta Psychologica Sinica*,
784 40(03), 368-379. <http://journal.psych.ac.cn/acps/EN/Y2008/V40/I03/368>
- 785 Wang, J. (2008b). A Quantitative Analysis on the Retirement Awareness and Psychological
786 State of Chinese Athletes. *Acta Psychologica Sinica*, 40(04), 496-506.
787 <http://journal.psych.ac.cn/acps/EN/Y2008/V40/I04/496>
- 788 Wang, M. C., & Cheng, W. (2018). A comparative study on the management system of
789 Chinese and American competitive sports. *Contemporary Sports Technology*, 8(10),
790 209-211. <https://doi.org/10.16655/j.cnki.2095-2813.2018.10.209>
- 791 Wang, Y. (2018). The new recognition of the concept of nationwide sport system and the
792 necessity of gradual classification reform in the new period. *Journal of Hebei Sport*
793 *University*, 32(2), 42-47. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1008-3596.2018.02.007>

- 794 Werthner, P., & Orlick, T. (1986). Retirement experiences of successful Olympic athletes.
795 *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 17(5), 337–363.
- 796 Wilson, E. J. (2008). Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power. *The ANNALS of the American*
797 *Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 110–124.
798 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207312618>
- 799 Wylleman, P. (2019a). A developmental and holistic perspective on transiting out of elite
800 sport. In M. H. Anshel (Ed.), *APA handbook of sport and exercise psychology* (pp.
801 201-216). American Psychological Association.
- 802 Wylleman, p. (2019b). An organizational perspective on applied sport psychology in elite
803 sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 42(1), 89-99,
804 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2019.01.008>
- 805 Wylleman, P., Stambulova, N., Torregrossa, M., Veldhoven, N. S., & Defruyt, S. (2018). The
806 development and evaluation of training modules for dual career support providers: A
807 European pilot. Retrieved from
808 [https://library.olympics.com/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/177233/the-development-and-](https://library.olympics.com/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/177233/the-development-and-evaluation-of-training-modules-for-dual-career-support-providers-a-european-pilo?_lg=en-GB)
809 [evaluation-of-training-modules-for-dual-career-support-providers-a-european-](https://library.olympics.com/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/177233/the-development-and-evaluation-of-training-modules-for-dual-career-support-providers-a-european-pilo?_lg=en-GB)
810 [pilo?_lg=en-GB](https://library.olympics.com/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/177233/the-development-and-evaluation-of-training-modules-for-dual-career-support-providers-a-european-pilo?_lg=en-GB)
- 811 Yang, H., Sun, S., Shu, W., & Wei, W. (2004). Upholding and further improving the Whole
812 Nation System for competitive sports in China. *Journal of Beijing Sport*
813 *University*, 27(5), 577-582.
814 [http://caod.oriprobe.com/articles/7844199/Upholding_and_Further_Improving_the_](http://caod.oriprobe.com/articles/7844199/Upholding_and_Further_Improving_the_Whole_nation_System_for_Competitiv.htm)
815 [Whole_nation_System_for_Competitiv.htm](http://caod.oriprobe.com/articles/7844199/Upholding_and_Further_Improving_the_Whole_nation_System_for_Competitiv.htm)
- 816 Zhang, C. (2017). Factors that affect high performance university sports team construction in
817 China. *Journal of Physical Education*, 24(1), 128-132.
818 <http://qikan.cqvip.com/Qikan/Article/Detail?id=671119161>

- 819 Zhang, C., Si, G., Chung, P., & Bu, D. (2017). A three-stage adversity coping model for
820 Chinese athletes. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 8(2), 87 - 95.
821 <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520704.2017.1287143>
- 822 Zhang, J., Xiong, Y., & Chen, L. (2019). The questions and countermeasures of the national
823 high-level sports reserve talented personnel training. *Sichuan Sports Science*, 38(01),
824 14-17. <https://doi.org/10.13932/j.cnki.sctyx.2019.01.04>
- 825 Zhang, Y., Chin, J. W., & Reekie, S. H. M. (2019). Education in the Chinese national sport
826 system: experiences of professional wushu athletes, *Sport in Society*, 22(8), 1466-
827 1480, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1529168>
- 828 Zhao, K., Hohmann, A., Chang, Y., Zhang, B., Pion, J., & Gao, B. (2019). Physiological,
829 Anthropometric, and Motor Characteristics of Elite Chinese Youth Athletes from Six
830 Different Sports. *Frontiers in Physiology*, 10(1), 1-12.
831 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fphys.2019.00405>
- 832 Zheng, J., Chen, S., Tan, T. C., & Lau, P. W. (2018). Sport policy in China (mainland).
833 *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 10(3), 469-491.
834 <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2017.1413585>
835
836